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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

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STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 262

SUBJECT: Opposition to the Khoury Regime in Lebanon

1. Leaders of the political opposition in Lebanon, spurred on by the success of the Egyptian coup and by their mounting dislike of the present corrupt regime, have renewed active planning for the overthrow of the well-entrenched government of President Khoury. They have openly appealed to the US, the UK, and France for moral and financial support for the overthrow of Khoury either by a military coup or by political means.

2. The opposition in Lebanon is made up of extreme individualists bound together only by a common dislike for the Khoury regime. Some sincerely disapprove of the corruption in the present government; others are merely disappointed at Khoury's refusal to appoint them to important positions. As in the past, they are not likely to present a united front and are bound by no common political program. Nationalism has not become the political force it has in Egypt and Iran, partly because of the almost equal division of the country into Moslems and Christians. The people resent corruption in the government, but in general they are politically apathetic and no leader or party has emerged capable of eliciting mass support.

3. In these circumstances, it is unlikely that the Khoury regime can be overthrown except by a military coup. Although several sources have reported that the joint commander of the police and gendarmerie is being considered as leader of a coup and that some junior army officers appear eager to spread dissension, there is no firm indication that the Khoury regime is losing control over the army or the police.

4. During the seven years in which President Khoury has been in office, he and his brother, Selim Khoury, have established a virtual "dictatorship" in the republic of Lebanon. The Cabinet of the present

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Prime Minister, Sami Solh, is a mixture of old-line politicians and newcomers, all of whom are believed to be willing tools of the Khoury brothers. During Solh's six months in office, he has faithfully carried out Selim Khoury's wishes. The tenure of his government, like those of his predecessors, depends almost entirely upon the wishes of the Khoury brothers.

5. The Khourys rose to their present powerful position by the use of such tactics as:

- a. employment of gangs to threaten strong-arm troops of other leaders, to coerce peaceful citizens into supporting certain political candidates and to instigate brawls when violence was needed;
- b. appointment of trusted followers to controlling positions in the government - particularly within the gendarmerie, police, and the army; and
- c. neutralizing potential opponents by bribery or appointment to lucrative government positions.

6. Although President Khoury is concerned about reports of a proposed coup, he will probably be able to handle the disorganized opposition and prevent it from gaining control of the security forces. He will probably attempt to appease them for the time being, but is not likely to go so far as to initiate any basic reforms or take steps to eliminate widespread government corruption.

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